

“Manifest Destiny:” Conquering a Continent



“Manifest Destiny”



The Early Republic and the West

- After the American Revolution, settlers flooded into the West.
- This led to several challenges.
 - Conflicting land claims between individuals and states
 - Squatters
 - Conflict with Native Americans
 - Fear in the East of anarchy in the West
- The federal government ultimately regulated settlement.
 - Perhaps the central role of the federal government until the late 1800s



The Great American Migration

- At least 4.5 million free and enslaved Americans crossed the Appalachian Mountains between 1790 and 1840.
- The population west of the mountains exploded.
 - Ohio
 - 1810 - 231,000
 - 1860 - 2,400,000
 - Kentucky
 - 1780 - 70,000
 - 1860 - 1,100,000
- This migration did not respect national boundaries.



The Cumberland Gap in Tennessee

Native Americans and Expansion

- At the end of the Revolutionary War and War of 1812, the US government declared that native tribes east of the Mississippi had lost their independence due to defeat in the wars.
- Most Americans agreed that Native American lands had to be transferred to whites.
- How would this happen?

Views on Native Americans

- In the Early Republic, government policy had the goals of
 - “Civilizing” Native Americans
 - Acquiring Native-owned lands through purchase
 - Preventing conflict on the frontier
- How would most Indians have likely responded to these goals?
- Most average Americans rejected the assimilation of Native Americans.
 - Viewed Native Americans as “savages” unfit for citizenship
 - Few states recognized Native American rights
 - Most Native Americans were not considered citizens
 - Tribes were treated like sovereign “states” within the boundaries of the United States

The Five “Civilized” Tribes

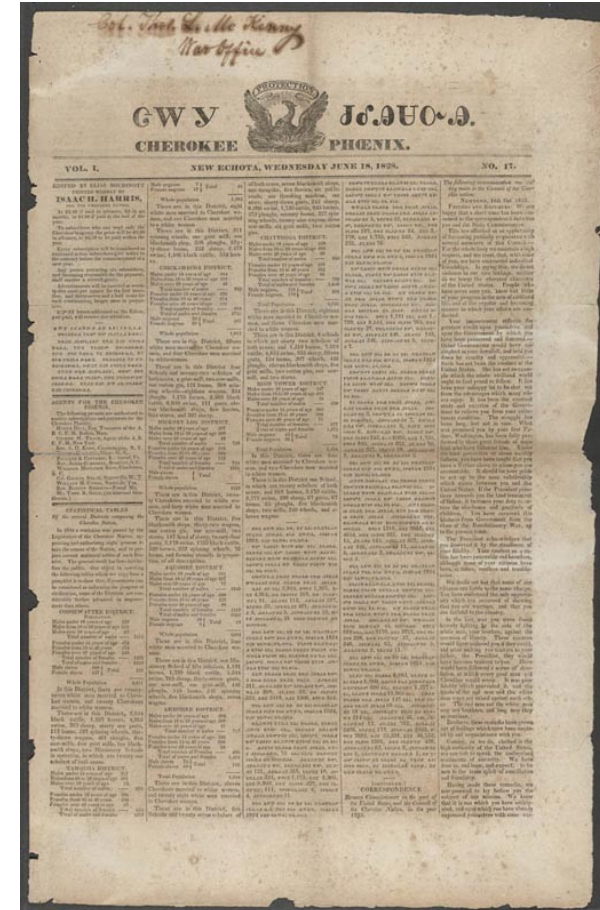
- The five “civilized” tribes were the Cherokee, Chickasaw, Choctaw, Creek, and Seminole.
- They lived in the “Old Southwest,” mostly Alabama, Florida, Georgia, Mississippi, and Tennessee.
- These tribes adopted many “civilized” practices.
 - The Cherokee
 - Established schools
 - Created an alphabet to write down their language
 - Published a newspaper in Cherokee and English
 - Adopted written laws and a national constitution
 - Adopted white gender norms and settled as farmers



The Cherokee



Sequoya, inventor of the Cherokee alphabet



The Cherokee Phoenix

Indian Removal

- By 1830, many Americans rejected the idea that Native Americans could be “civilized.”
- Southern states tried to force Native Americans to leave or to give up their “tribal” rights.
- The Cherokee of Georgia petitioned Congress and even sued the state in court to prevent removal.
 - In 1832, the Cherokee won their case in the Supreme Court invalidating removal.
 - Presidents Jackson and Van Buren refused to enforce the decision.
- In 1836, a faction of Cherokee leaders signed a removal treaty.
 - Under severe pressure from Georgia officials and white settlers
- In 1838, federal troops forcibly removed the Cherokee who refused to leave their lands.
 - Approximately 18,000 men, women, and children were herded into stockades.
 - They were then forced to march 1,000 miles west to modern day Oklahoma.
 - Approximately $\frac{1}{4}$ of the people died on the trip.
 - The trip became known as the “Trail of Tears.”

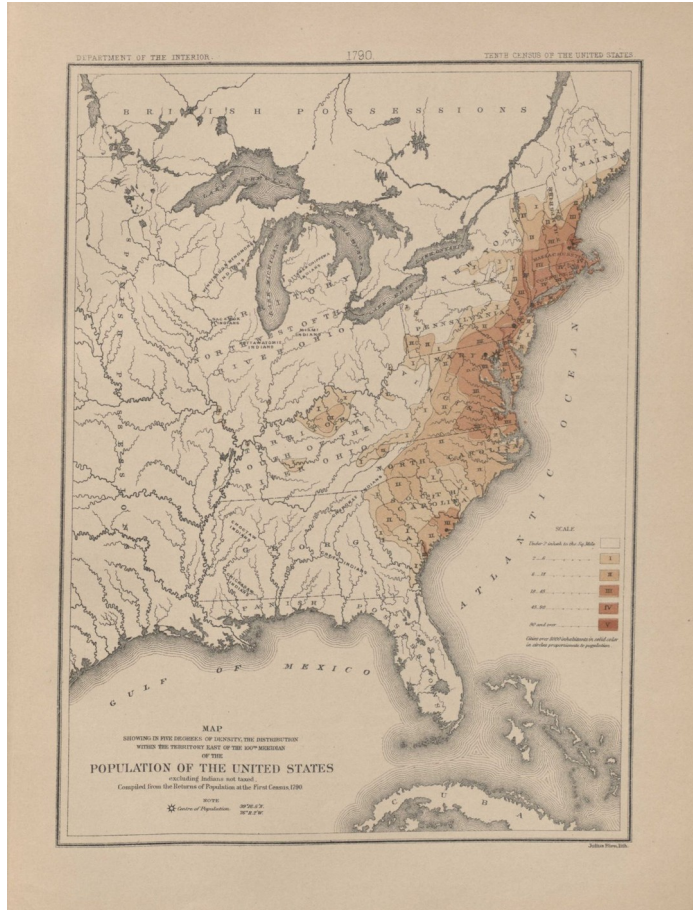
Indian Removal

I saw the helpless Cherokees arrested and dragged from their homes, and driven at the bayonet point into the stockades. And in the chill of a drizzling rain on an October morning I saw them loaded like cattle or sheep into six hundred and forty-five wagons and started toward the west. One can never forget the sadness and solemnity of that morning. Chief John Ross led [them] in prayer and when the bugle sounded and the wagons started rolling many of the children rose to their feet and waved their little hands good-by to their mountain homes, knowing they were leaving them forever. Many of these helpless people did not have blankets and many of them had been driven from home barefooted. On the morning of November the 17th we encountered a terrific sleet and snow storm with freezing temperatures and from that day until we reached the end of the fateful journey on March the 26th, 1839, the sufferings of the Cherokees were awful. The trail of the exiles was a trail of death. They had to sleep in the wagons and on the ground without fire. And I have known as many as twenty-two of them to die in one night of pneumonia due to ill treatment, cold, and exposure.

- Private John G. Burnett, Captain Abraham McClellan's Company, 2nd Regiment, 2nd Brigade, Mounted Infantry, Cherokee Indian Removal, 1838-39



Native Americans and the United States



Euro-American Population of US, 1790



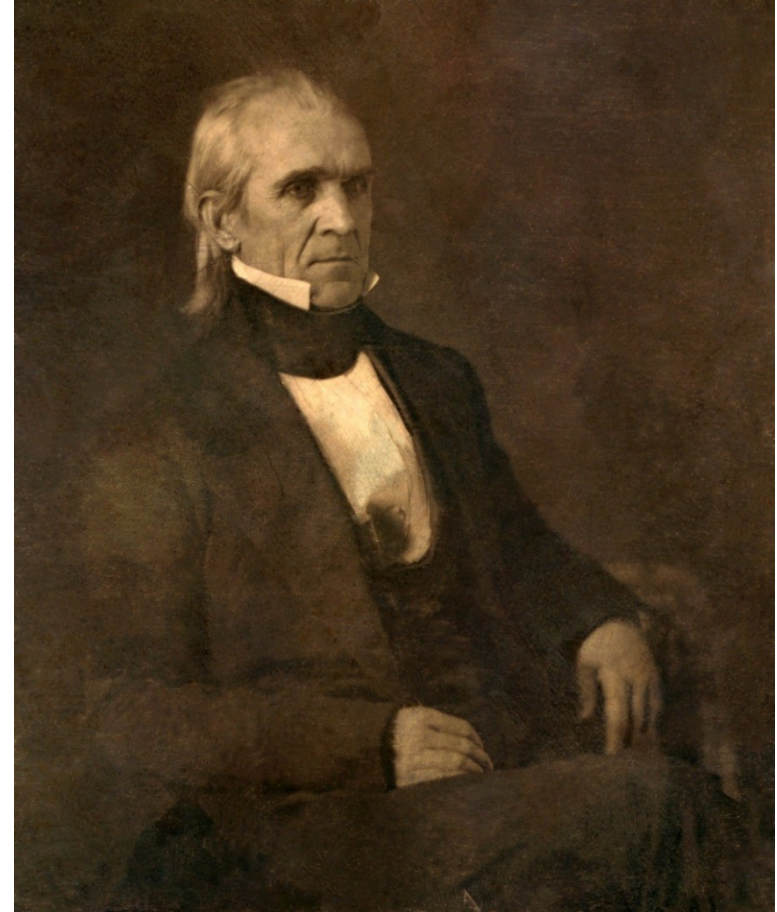
Indian Reservations by the late 1800s

“Manifest Destiny”

- An idea that flourished in the Antebellum Period.
 - Belief that the United States had a right from God to control North America.
- Believers argued that three factors indicated God’s favor for the United States and legitimated the conquest of the continent.
 - The rapid growth of the American population
 - The collapse of the Native American population
 - America’s free institutions resting on a Christian foundation
- Some argued the US should control all of North America.

The Manifest Destiny President

- James K. Polk
 - A Tennessee planter and enslaver
 - Elected president in 1844 as a Democrat
 - Strongly believed in manifest destiny
 - Ran on a platform of the annexation of Texas and all of Oregon
 - Believed the US should annex California



War with Mexico

- On the day before Polk's inauguration, Congress voted to admit Texas.
- Polk quickly settled the Oregon dispute with the UK agreeing to a border below what he had promised in his campaign.
- Polk next turned to the acquisition of California.
 - Mexico rejected negotiation.
 - Polk concluded war would be necessary to take California.
 - Polk decided to provoke an international incident and sent American troops into territory disputed with Mexico.

The Mexican-American War

- On April 25, 1846, Mexican forces attacked American troops in the disputed territory.
- On May 13, 1846, Congress declared war on Mexico.
- Most Americans supported the war.
- A minority opposed it (mostly northern Whigs).
 - Many feared that the goal of the war was to spread slavery.
 - Others felt the war was unjust and immoral.

The Mexican-American War



The American Occupation of Mexico City

The Treaty of Guadalupe Hidalgo

- Signed February, 1848
 - Ended the war.
 - Confirmed the annexation of Texas.
 - Sold California, New Mexico, Arizona, Nevada, and Utah to the US in return for \$15 million.
- The results of the war
 - Confirmed American control of the center of North America from the Atlantic to the Pacific.
 - Bred resentment on the part of Mexico for decades.
 - Brought to the fore the question of the place of slavery in the West.
 - (Victory in the Mexican-American War was a central cause of the Civil War.)



Americans reacting to war news